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ABSTRACT

This is a prewriting activity for personal memoir or autobiographical writing. Grade 6-8 students brainstorm for important memories, create graphics or symbols for their most important memories, and construct a life map on tag board or construction paper, connecting drawings and captions of high and low points with a highway. During four 50-minute sessions, students will: identify key moments, people, and places in their lives; create an evaluative scale, from high points to low points, ranking the key moments; order key moments in chronological order; and create illustrations and text that relate to the key moments. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A rubric graphic life map and a roadmap of life are attached. (PM)

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Graphic Life Map

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Grade Band

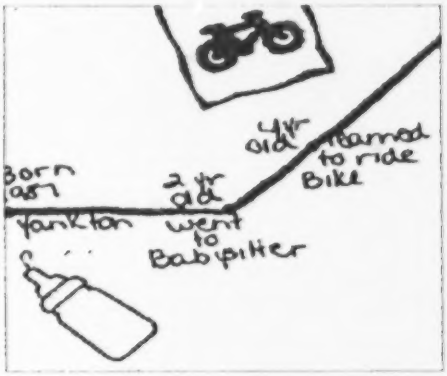
6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Four 50-minute sessions

Overview

Students sometimes have difficulty recalling important events in their early lives to write about. Brainstorming as a whole class helps students recall pivotal moments in their lives. Working together to create graphic symbols for these moments, people, and places, helps students recall the details. Narrowing memories to eight to ten specific high and low points and connecting them on a map will help them see some kind of pattern. The graphic life map will not only give them specific instances to write about; creating a graphic for each memory will help bring the events to life.



From Theory to Practice

Working in groups helps students clarify their thinking, and the use of graphics helps the students recall memories. The use of graphics teaches students to think metaphorically, and "a side benefit from working with graphics is that of both short- and long-term memory improvement." This lesson is an adaptation of Linda Rief's Positive-Negative Graphs.

Further Reading

Claggett, Fran and Joan Brown. 1992. *Drawing Your Own Conclusions*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rief, Linda. 1992. *Seeking Diversity*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Student Objectives

Students will

- identify key moments, people, and places in their lives.
- create an evaluative scale, from high points to low points, ranking the key moments.
- order key moments in chronological order.
- create illustrations and text that relate to the key moments.

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Resources

- Rubric Graphic Life Map
- Instructions for Life Map
- Graphing Your Life Web Site
- World Studies Web Site
- Memoir Essay Web Site
- Graphing Your Life Web Site
- Timeline of My Life Web Site
- Traci's Life Map Web Site

Instructional Plan

Resources

1. General classroom materials (tag board, poster paper, construction paper, colored markers, crayons, other supplies for drawing the maps)
2. Instruction sheet for students
3. Model of a graphic life map (use Web sites provided)

Preparation

Assemble resources. Be familiar with graphic life map instructions. Perhaps construct your own life map as an example for students.

Instruction and Activities

1. The teacher should discuss with students the idea of symbols for events in life. For instance, symbol of birth could be a stork or baby; divorce in family could be a drawing of stick people with a lightning strike down the middleHave students practice a couple of graphic symbols for common events. Explain that drawings on maps can be either symbolic or realistic, but explain that graphics should be drawn.
2. Divide students into groups of 3 to 4.
3. Go over directions for graphic life map and procedure.
4. Help students start brainstorming for important events, people, and places in their lives.
5. Have students list individual memories and draw a graphic for each memory.
6. Have students limit their memories to the 8 to 10 most important and transfer these to a piece of tag board or construction paper.
7. Have students draw graphics and add caption for each memory, and connect their memories with a road or highway.
8. Display student maps or put in their portfolios.

Extension Activities

If your class has access to computers with a drawing program, the life maps could be done on the computer, but be sure the students still draw their graphics and do not just insert clip art.

Writing. After this prewriting exercise, students can use selected events on their maps to write individual autobiographies.

Web Resources

Graphing Your Life
http://www.npatterson.net/memoir/graphing.html
Nancy Patterson's assignment on graphing your life.

Graphing Your Life
http://faculty.valencia.cc.fl.us/rtakashima/graphingyourlife.htm

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Another teacher's life graph assignment.

Memoir Essay
http://www.cerritos.edu/fquaas/assignments/English52/memoir.htm
A more elaborate life map assignment.

World Studies
http://schools.shorelineschools.org/shorewood/Academics/ss/ws10/projects.html
A world studies life map assignment.

Timeline of My Life
http://www.pschulze.com/subweb/alli/alli's%20map.jpg
One of my students' graphic life maps. This link provided with student permission.

Traci's Life Map
http://www.pschulze.com/subweb/traci/traci's%20map.gif
Another of my students' graphic life map. This link provided with student permission.

Student Assessment/Reflections

Since this is a prewriting activity, I often do not grade it. I do give participation points simply for completing the activity. However, if you feel the need for grading, I would suggest not grading the literary quality of the map but rather the recognition of important events and effectiveness of the design.

A rubric is available.

NCTE/IRA Standards

5 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

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RUBRIC GRAPHIC LIFE MAP

CATEGORY	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Cooperation	Worked cooperatively with group all the time with no need for adult intervention.	Worked cooperatively with group most of time but had a few problems that the team resolved themselves.	Worked cooperatively with groupmost of the time, but had one problem that required adult intervention.	Worked cooperatively with group some of the time, but had several problems that required adult intervention.
Use of Time	Used time well during each class period (as shown by observation by teacher, and progress on map) with no adult reminders.	Used time well during most class periods (as shown by observation by teacher, and of progress in journal) with no adult reminders.	Used time well (as shown by observation by teacher and progress in journal), but required adult reminders on one or more occasions to do so.	Used time poorly (as shown by observation by teacher and/or progress in journal) in spite of several adult reminders to do so.
Clarity and Neatness	Life Map is easy to read and all elements are so clearly written, labeled, or drawn that another student could create the presentation if necessary.	Life map is easy to read and most elements are clearly written, labeled, or drawn. Another person might be able to create the presentation after asking one or two questions.	Life map is hard to read with rough drawings and labels. It would be hard for another person to create this presentation without asking lots of questions.	Life Map is hard to read and one cannot tell what goes where. It would be impossible for another person to create this presentation without asking lots of questions.
Required Elements	Life Map included all required elements as well as a few additional elements.	Life Map included all required elements and one additional element.	Life Map included all required elements.	One or more required elements was missing from the Life map.
Content	All content is in the students' own words and drawings and is accurate.	Almost all content is in the students' own words and drawings and is accurate.	At least half of the content is in the students' own words and drawings and is accurate.	Less than half of the content is in the students' own words and/or drawings and is accurate.
Spelling & Grammar	No spelling or grammatical mistakes on a life map with lots of text.	No spelling or grammatical mistakes on a life map with little text.	One spelling or grammatical error on the life map.	Several spelling and/or grammatical errors on the life map.

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Roadmap of Your Life

To help you plan for writing autobiography, you will construct a roadmap of the high and low points of your life. You will create a graphic representation of important events, people and places in your life.

Follow this procedure:

1. Get in groups of 3 to 4 students and start brainstorming significant events in your life. These can be happy memories, sad memories, scary memories, important places, important people, life changing events – your choice.
2. Choose your individual memories and draw a graphic representation or symbol for each memory.
3. Narrow your choices to the 8 to 10 most important memories and Arrange them in chronological order (by the years in which they occurred).
4. On a piece of tag board or colored construction paper, mark these memories – happy memories above the center of the paper and sad memories below the center of the paper. Connect the dots with a two-lane road or highway.
5. In your groups brainstorm for more symbols for the events on your map.
6. Using markers or crayons, draw your quick draw graphic or other symbol for each event. (Example – symbol of birth could be a stork or baby, Divorce in family could be a drawing of stick people with a lightning strike down the middle.
7. Write a brief caption for each symbol so that people viewing your map will understand the event.
8. Complete map, going over drawings and words and highway until it is clear and easy to read.

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